

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00
FMC-02 CG-00 DLOS-09 OES-07 IO-14 PM-05 H-02
L-03 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15
/116 W

-----120223 241756Z /46

P 241545Z JAN 78

FM AMCONSUL BREMEN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2500
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY
AMCONSUL DUESSELDORF PRIORITY
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT PRIORITY
AMCONSUL HAMBURG PRIORITY
AMCONSUL MUNICH PRIORITY
AMCONSUL STUTTGART PRIORITY
USMISSION BERLIN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY
USAREUR HEIDELBERG PRIORITY
USAFE RAMSTEIN PRIORITY
USCINCEUR STUTTGART PRIORITY

UNCLAS BREMEN 051

SECSTATE PASS COMMERCE, LABOR

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, EWWT, GW

SUBJECT: DOCKWORKERS STRIKE GERMAN NORTH SEA AND BALTIC PORTS

1. SUMMARY. THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION

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(OETV) ON JANUARY 24 CALLED FOR A STRIKE BY GERMAN DOCKWORKERS,
BEGINNING JANUARY 25 IN THE PORTS OF BREMEN/BREMERHAVEN, HAMBURG,
CUXHAVEN, LUEBECK, NORDENHAM, BRAKE, AND EMDEN. BOTH UNION
AND EMPLOYERS ARE WILLING TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT THE
NEGOTIATIONS ARE SNAGGED ON THE AMOUNT OF WAGE INCREASE
ACCEPTABLE. THE LENGTH OF THE STRIKE CANNOT BE ESTIMATED. THE
WAGE SETTLEMENT IN THIS STRIKE MAY SET THE PRECEDENT FOR OTHER

LABOR NEGOTIATIONS WHICH HAVE JUST BEGUN IN GERMANY.
END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER THE ZENTRALVERBAND DER DEUTSCHEN SEEHAFENBETRIEBE (CENTRAL ORGANIZATION OF GERMAN SEA PORT OPERATORS) AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION (OETV) FAILED TO REACH AGREEMENT ON WAGE INCREASES FOR THE GERMAN DOCKWORKERS, THE TRADE UNION CALLED FOR A STRIKE BEGINNING THE FIRST SHIFT JANUARY 25 IN THE GERMAN PORTS OF BREMEN/BREMERHAVEN, HAMBURG, CUXHAVEN, LUEBECK, NORDENHAM, BRAKE, AND EMDEN. EMERGENCY PRECAUTIONS HAVE BEEN AGREED UPON BY EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS ORGANIZATIONS TO ENSURE THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF THE DOCK INSTALLATIONS AND SHIPS IN THESE PORTS.

3. BOTH SIDES IN THE WAGE DISPUTE ARE WILLING TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN SNAGGED ON THE ISSUE OF HOW MUCH THE WAGE INCREASE WILL BE. A MEDIATOR HAS ALREADY BEEN CALLED IN TO ASSIST. THE CHIEF NEGOTIATOR FOR THE ZENTRALVERBAND STATED THAT HE WAS SURPRISED AT THE TRADE UNION ANNOUNCEMENT OF A DOCKWORKERS STRIKE ONLY A FEW HOURS AFTER BOTH SIDES FAILED TO REACH AGREEMENT ON WAGE HIKE DURING THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 23/24. THE UNION HAD ORIGINALLY DEMANDED A WAGE HIKE OF NINE PER CENT AND REJECTED THE MEDIATOR'S RECOMMENDATION OF AN AVERAGE 5.3 PER CENT. THE UNION, USING THE POWER OF 91.12 PER CENT MAJORITY VOTE OF ITS MEMBERS FOR A STRIKE, FORCED THE ZENTRALVERBAND TO OFFER AN AVERAGE WAGE INCREASE OF NEARLY UNCLASSIFIED

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6 PER CENT WHICH WAS ALSO REJECTED BY THE UNION, WHICH IS HOLDING OUT FOR 7 PER CENT. NEGOTIATIONS MAY CONTINUE TODAY, JANUARY 24, HOWEVER, THE STRIKE WILL BEGIN JANUARY 25 AND CANNOT BE ENDED UNTIL THE RANK AND FILE APPROVE A SETTLEMENT BY A VOTE OF MORE THAN 50 PER CENT.

4. THE TRADE UNION HAS ALSO CALLED FOR INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND HAS URGED THE DOCKWORKERS IN THE BENELUX AND BRITISH PORTS NOT TO HANDLE CARGO ORIGINALLY DESTINED FOR GERMAN PORTS.

5. THE BREMEN PORT AUTHORITY HAS INFORMED MAJOR US SHIPPING COMPANIES AS WELL AS THE MILITARY SEA TRANSPORT SERVICE (MSTS) ABOUT THE STRIKE AND WILL KEEP THEM INFORMED ABOUT FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS.

6. COMMENTS: (A) THE TRADE UNION MAY HAVE CALLED FOR THE STRIKE AS PART OF A STRATEGY DESIGNED TO SET A PRECEDENT OF A RELATIVELY HIGH WAGE SETTLEMENT WHICH WOULD THEN BE USED IN OTHER NEGOTIATIONS NOW BEING CONDUCTED IN OTHER SECTORS. IF TRUE, THIS MAY MEAN THE UNION WILL REMAIN ADAMANT IN ITS DEMANDS AND, IF THE EMPLOYERS ARE UNWILLING TO ACCEDE TO

THESE DEMANDS, THE STRIKE MAY BE PROLONGED.

(B) LOCAL OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE TRADE UNION'S PLEA FOR SOLIDARITY BY DOCKWORKERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES WILL BE UNSUCCESSFUL. THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY, HOWEVER, THAT THE OTHER EUROPEAN PORTS COULD NOT HANDLE THE ADDITIONAL VOLUME OF CARGO IN THEIR PORTS. AN ESTIMATED 3,300 SEAGOING VESSELS AND EIGHT MILLION TONS OF CARGO PER MONTH ARE HANDLED BY THE PORTS IN QUESTION. HUNTER

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